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**A HISTORY OF INVOLVEMENT IN MOOTW**

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Jet aircraft do not typically come to mind when the subject of MOOTW is discussed. Instead, images of Marines slogging through rice paddies or soldiers patrolling dusty backstreets better exemplify small-scale conflict for most people. This image notwithstanding, the USAF or its predecessors<sup>1</sup> have been heavily involved in MOOTW for 80 years, flying in over 800 such operations since 1916.<sup>2</sup> From the Berlin Airlift to more-recent operations such as Operation Joint Endeavor in Bosnia (see Appendix B), the USAF has been deeply involved in all types of lesser conflicts and noncombat operations. In particular, recent peace operations have dramatically increased the “peacetime” demands on the USAF.

This chapter reviews and analyzes past and current USAF involvement in MOOTW, by mission type.

**OVERVIEW OF PAST OPERATIONS**

Although MOOTW are not new to the USAF, the USAF has been doing more of them since the Cold War ended. Indeed, during the first five years of the post-Cold War period (1991–1995), the USAF participated in 194 MOOTW, nearly double the 100 operations of the preceding five years of the Cold War (1986–1990), as Figure 2.1 indicates. (The annual number of USAF MOOTW operations is

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<sup>1</sup>The Army Air Service, Army Air Corps, and Army Air Force.

<sup>2</sup>See Appendix A for more information on these operations.

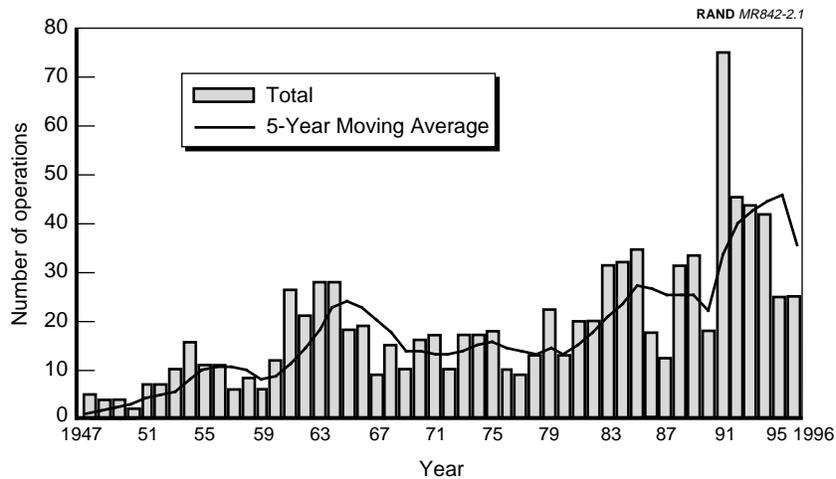


Figure 2.1—USAF Involvement in MOOTW, 1947–1996

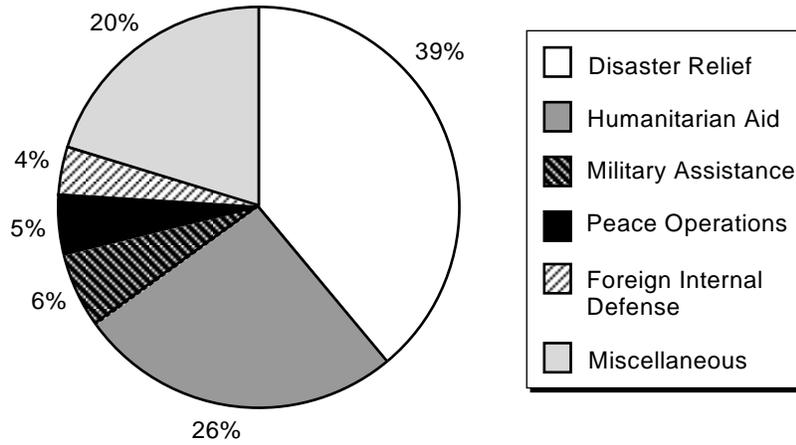
shown as a vertical bar; the curve indicates a 5-year moving average (MA).<sup>3</sup> Figure 2.1 also shows that, in 1995 and 1996, the number of MOOTW dropped back down to the levels experienced in the 1980s, although, as we describe in Chapter Four, the demands of these current operations are much greater.

Figure 2.2 breaks out USAF participation in MOOTW by major mission categories for the period 1916–1996. The majority (65 percent) of these operations have been disaster-relief or humanitarian-aid missions. Medevac, search and rescue, hostage rescue, logistics support, strikes and raids, and a variety of special missions make up the remaining 20 percent of “miscellaneous” operations. Table 2.1 lists 11 operations to give the reader some sense of the breadth of the missions in which USAF forces have participated.

The following pages describe the major types of MOOTW in which the USAF participated between 1916 and 1996. In addition to these major categories, the USAF conducted logistics support, search and rescue, and assorted other missions, all of which are listed in Appendix A.

<sup>3</sup>A 5-year moving average gives additional information on trends by adding the data from the present year and previous four years, then dividing by 5.

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**Figure 2.2—USAF Involvement in MOOTW, by Type of Operation: 1916-1996**

**Table 2.1**

**Examples of USAF Involvement in MOOTW**

Operation	Purpose	Location	Date
Border patrols	Civil support	Mexican border	1919-1921
First Air Mail	Civil support	United States	February-June 1934
Cholera outbreak	Disaster relief	Egypt	October 1947
Kinderlift I	Humanitarian aid	Germany	August 1953
Farmgate	Foreign internal defense	Vietnam	November 1961
Sinking ship	Search & rescue	Philippines	October 1971
Mayaguez rescue	Hostage rescue	Cambodia	May 1975
Hostage return	Medevac	Iran	January 1981
Elf One	Military aid	Saudi Arabia	1981-1989
Deliberate Force	Peace operation	Bosnia	August 1995
Assured Response	Noncombatant evacuation operations	Liberia	April 1996

## **Disaster Relief**

Since 1916, the USAF or its predecessors have participated in 338 disaster-relief missions in Latin America, Africa, Asia, Europe, and the United States following floods, hurricanes, typhoons, droughts, earthquakes, snowstorms, volcano eruptions, and insect infestations. We distinguish *disaster-relief* operations from *humanitarian aid* for two reasons. First, they often occur with no warning, so it is difficult to do detailed planning and preparation. Second, the victims are often in situations of urgent need, requiring the USAF to respond very quickly if it is to arrive in time.

The average disaster-relief operation was quite small, involving ten aircraft flying 80 sorties. Typical loads included food, blankets, tents, medicine, water-purification equipment, construction materials, vehicles, heavy equipment, and relief workers. Most operations entailed air-landing the cargo, although a few required parachute delivery of supplies. Some also required supplies to be reloaded onto helicopters for delivery to more-isolated areas.

## **Humanitarian Aid**

We define *humanitarian-aid operations* as those providing any type of nonmilitary assistance to people in situations of chronic need, unrelated to a specific disaster. Examples include aid to refugees, medical evacuations of foreign nationals, and a host of projects to help poor nations with medical, food, construction, and other aid. The USAF participated in 230 humanitarian-aid operations between 1916 and 1996, delivering close to 3 million tons of relief supplies and equipment.<sup>4</sup> Operation Provide Relief was one of the larger recent operations, flying 3,100 sorties to Somalia in 1992 to avert the imminent starvation of close to 1 million people.<sup>5</sup> This emergency situation was caused by the combination of a severe famine and the disruption of distribution networks by an ongoing civil war.

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<sup>4</sup>Of the 3-million-ton total, 77 percent was delivered in the 16-month-long Berlin Airlift.

<sup>5</sup>See USAF, *The Air Mobility Command, June 1992–June 1993: Highlights of the First Year*, Scott Air Force Base (AFB), Ill.: Headquarters, Air Mobility Command, Office of History, 1993b, p. 2.

## Noncombatant Evacuation Operations

The USAF was involved in 31 noncombatant evacuation operations (NEOs) in this period, moving by air a total of almost 160,000 people. The largest USAF NEOs were Operations Frequent Wind and Fiery Vigil. Operation Frequent Wind, the evacuation of Vietnam in April 1975, moved over 50,000 people. Operation Fiery Vigil, the evacuation of U.S. personnel from the Philippines following the eruption of Mount Pinatubo, also required the USAF to lift over 50,000 personnel.<sup>6</sup> More recently, the USAF participated in NEOs in Liberia and the Central African Republic in April and May of 1996, lifting out 2,000 and 60 personnel, respectively.

## Strikes/Raids

Strikes are both the most visible USAF MOOTW and the most similar to major wars. They also are the least-common MOOTW, occurring only eight times since 1947. Examples of past strikes include Operations Urgent Fury (Grenada, 1983) and Just Cause (Panama, 1989). In these operations, USAF aircraft transported large intervention forces, conducted surveillance and reconnaissance missions, and provided close support for friendly ground forces. Operation Eldorado Canyon, the 1986 airstrike against Libya, is an example of a raid.

## Medevac

The USAF conducted 37 MOOTW medical-evacuation (medevac) missions of U.S. nationals between 1971 and 1996.<sup>7</sup> Examples include transporting victims of the 1977 Canary Island airliner collision, the 1983 Beirut Marine barracks bombing, the 1987 attack on

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<sup>6</sup>See Thomas Tobin, *Last Flight from Saigon*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Air Force, Office of History, 1978; Urey Patrick, *U.S. Marine Corps Participation in the Emergency Evacuations of Phnom Penh and Saigon: Operations Eagle Pull and Frequent Wind*, Arlington, Va.: Center for Naval Analyses, June 1977b; and USAF, *Toward the Air Mobility Command: A Chronology of Tanker and Airlift Events*, Scott AFB, Ill.: Headquarters, Air Mobility Command, Office of History, 1993a, pp. 33–34.

<sup>7</sup>We do not include the thousands of medevac missions flown during the Vietnam War, because it was not a MOOTW. In the sources we examined, we were unable to find examples or statistics of medevacs occurring before 1971.

the USS *Stark*, as well as returning released hostages from Lebanon. In this category, we also include the return of U.S. citizens' remains. Many such missions have been flown to return the remains of persons missing in action (MIAs) from the Vietnam War. More recently, C-17 airlifters carried the remains of Commerce Secretary Ron Brown and 32 other victims of the April 1996 crash of a USAF transport in Croatia.

### **Hostage Rescue**

The USAF supported four hostage-rescue missions between 1965 and 1985: the 1965 rescue of American hostages held in Ethiopia, which employed airlifting helicopters; reconnaissance, strike, and transport missions flown during the 1975 Mayaguez rescue; transport missions flown during the aborted 1980 attempt to rescue hostages from Iran; and the 1985 deployment of U.S. special forces to Italy during the *Achille Lauro* hijacking. We also think it is highly likely—given the sensitivity of counter-terrorist operations—that the USAF has participated in additional missions not documented in the public record.

### **Foreign Internal Defense**

In this period, the USAF undertook 31 foreign internal defense (FID) operations, providing assistance to friendly governments facing armed internal threats. The first such operation provided maintenance support to French forces in Vietnam between 1952 and 1954. We also included in this category several early U.S. operations in Vietnam (e.g., Operation Farmgate in 1961) that preceded the deployment of U.S. ground forces in 1965. Other examples include providing aid to the El Salvadoran government against the Farabundo Martí-National Liberation Front (FMLN) guerrillas in the 1980s and, most recently, supplying Israel with explosive-detection devices in March 1996.

### **Military Assistance**

There were 55 military-assistance operations. In most of these operations, the USAF deployed forces, delivered equipment, and advised

or otherwise aided friendly governments facing external threats. Examples include aid to Taiwan during the 1958 Quemoy crisis, deployment of forces to Germany during the 1961 Berlin Crisis, and assistance to various Persian Gulf nations during the 1980s.

### **Counterdrug**

The USAF participated in 11 large counterdrug operations between 1983 and 1996. Between 1983 and 1989, USAF involvement was fairly limited. In 1989, counterdrug operations were greatly expanded when President George Bush directed DoD to provide surveillance and intelligence support to U.S. law enforcement agency drug-interdiction efforts. Since then, the USAF has been a full member of the interagency task force that conducts counterdrug operations in Latin America and the Caribbean, participating in some aspect of these operations on a daily basis. Specifically, the USAF provides airlift support, operates several ground-based radars in Latin America, and flies surveillance and reconnaissance missions in search of drug-processing facilities and aircraft smuggling drugs. The information collected during the surveillance missions is used to better understand smuggling tactics and is also handed off to law enforcement and other agencies that attempt to intercept the drug traffickers once the aircraft have landed. In cases of airdrops of drugs to waiting boats, the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard use the surveillance data to intercept the boats. Currently, the USAF is flying approximately 20 AWACS sorties per month in support of counterdrug operations.<sup>8</sup>

### **Peace Operations**

The USAF flew its first peace-operation missions during the Suez Crisis in 1956. Since then, it has supported another 46 peace operations. In most of these operations, the USAF role was limited to the transport of U.N. peacekeepers. More recently, the USAF has been involved in more-demanding peace operations.

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<sup>8</sup>See Steven Watkins, "The Air War on Drugs," *Air Force Times*, July 15, 1996, pp. 12-14.

For example, after the Gulf War ended in 1991, the USAF was assigned a number of tasks associated with the enforcement of the cease-fire agreement. In the north, Operation Provide Comfort was both a peace operation and a humanitarian-aid effort. Its purpose was to protect, provide shelter for, and feed Iraqi Kurdish refugees along the Turkish border. Almost 9,000 sorties were flown as part of the relief effort. An additional 34,000 sorties were flown to enforce the northern no-fly zone. In the south, Operation Southern Watch has enforced a similar no-fly zone to protect Iraqi Shiites from air attack, flying 68,000 sorties to date. Both operations are ongoing, and no end date has been projected.

In 1992, the USAF participated in Operation Restore Hope in Somalia, flying over 1,000 sorties deploying and resupplying U.S. forces.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, USAF AC-130s flew a small number of strike and close-support sorties. Finally, in Bosnia, USAF aircraft helped enforce a no-fly zone in Operation Deny Flight, conducted punitive strikes against Serb targets in Operation Deliberate Force, and supported the NATO Implementation Force in Operation Joint Endeavor. The USAF is now conducting Operation Decisive Edge. To date, the USAF has flown over 30,000 sorties over Bosnia.

## **THE CHANGING CHARACTER OF MOOTW**

With the end of the Cold War, the relative mix of USAF MOOTW activities has changed, as shown in Table 2.2. Disaster relief and humanitarian aid still make up the bulk of operations, but their relative proportions have reversed. Military-assistance operations and FID operations are both down; peace operations have more than doubled.

Although only 9 percent of total operations, peace operations represent 90 percent of all MOOTW sorties flown since the end of the Cold War. Thus, peace operations are driving the currently high USAF optempo.

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<sup>9</sup>USAF, *The Air Mobility Command, June 1992–June 1993: Highlights of the First Year*, Scott AFB, Ill.: Headquarters, Air Mobility Command, Office of History, 1993b, p. 4.

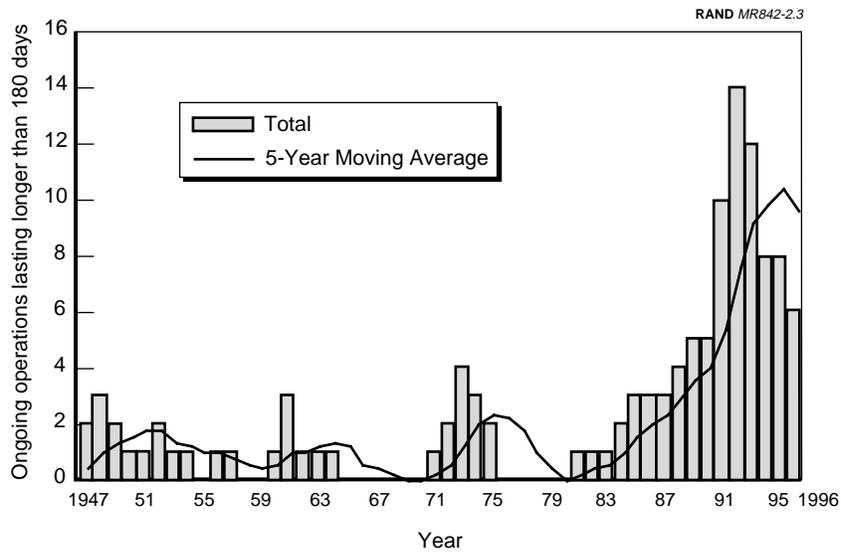
**Table 2.2**  
**Percentage of Operations: Cold War Versus**  
**Post-Cold War MOOTW**

Type of Operation	1916-1988	1989-1996
Disaster relief	48	16
Humanitarian aid	17	50
Military assistance	8	2
Peace operations	4	9
FID	5	1
Miscellaneous	18	22

Since 1991, the USAF has flown over 130,000 sorties in the five largest peace operations (Deny Flight, Deliberate Force, Joint Endeavor, Provide Comfort, Southern Watch). This optempo has proven to be a challenge for the USAF, requiring long temporary duties (TDYs) and forcing deployed crews to forgo the training they would have received if they had remained at home station. Thus, to the extent that the USAF has an optempo problem caused by MOOTW, these data suggest that the problem is caused primarily by peace operations. Recent peace operations are also lasting much longer than those previously. Figure 2.3 shows the tremendous growth in the number of USAF MOOTW lasting longer than 180 days.

Peace operations are a problem for several reasons. All five of the peace operations mentioned above involved enforcing no-fly zones. The current concept of operation (CONOP) for these missions requires fighters and AWACS to fly long sorties patrolling the controlled airspace. These aircraft must be supported, in turn, by tankers, electronic warfare, and other support assets. As a result, most peace-operations sorties are flown to patrol or support patrols of these zones. A second reason that peace operations are a problem is their prolonged and overlapping nature. USAF squadrons have been rotating through Turkey and Saudi Arabia<sup>10</sup> since 1991 to fly Provide Comfort and Southern Watch sorties, and through Italy since

<sup>10</sup>As of April 1996, one USAF squadron is flying Southern Watch sorties out of Jordan also.



**Figure 2.3—USAF Involvement in MOOTW Exceeding 180 Days, 1947–1996**

1993 to fly Deny Flight, Deliberate Force, Joint Endeavor, and Decisive Edge sorties over Bosnia.

The next chapter explores the effect those peace operations are having on USAF optempo, training, and readiness.